



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR

January 19, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Mark Numainville, City Clerk

Subject: Temporarily Suspending Certain Provisions of the Commissioners' Manual that Apply to Meetings of Subcommittees

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution temporarily suspending the provisions of the Commissioners' Manual and Resolution No. 69,063-N.S. that ad hoc subcommittees of City boards and commissions follow State open meeting procedures, thereby enabling ad hoc subcommittees to meet and conduct work while allowing City staff to continue emergency response efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

There are no direct fiscal impacts associated with this recommendation. Temporarily suspending the application of State open meeting procedures to ad hoc subcommittees will decrease the amount of staff time required to coordinate and support the functions of City boards and commissions. This will enable staff that are currently assigned to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency response to continue their assignments and efforts with the City's Emergency Operations Center, and at the same time allow the work of ad hoc subcommittees to resume.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On March 10, 2020, the City Council ratified the proclamation of the Director of Emergency Services for a state of local emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency proclamation has been renewed several times by the Council, most recently on December 15, 2020, and remains in effect.

In response to the emergency proclamation, staff resources and the resources of City legislative bodies have been directed to the pandemic response. This includes staff assigned as commission secretaries, many of whom are engaged in work with the Emergency Operations Center or are fulfilling new duties related to the impacts of the pandemic. Staff are not able to provide support to boards and commissions at the pre-pandemic level, while also supporting the efforts of the pandemic response and Emergency Operations Center.

At the November 30, 2020 Agenda & Rules Committee meeting, the Committee discussed options for enabling City boards and commissions to conduct work, given the limitations on staff resources. One of the options considered is to temporarily suspend the requirement for ad hoc subcommittees of City boards and commissions to notice their meetings and require public participation. Ad hoc subcommittees are temporary single-purpose advisory committees composed of less than a quorum of the members of a commission or board. Under the State's open meeting law (also known as the Brown Act), ad hoc subcommittees are not legislative bodies, and are not required to post agendas or allow for public participation. These requirements are specific to Berkeley and are adopted by resolution in the Commissioners' Manual.

The Agenda & Rules Committee requested that staff prepare an item for the City Council's consideration to temporarily suspend these local noticing and participation requirements for ad hoc subcommittees. Temporary suspension of these requirements will allow ad hoc subcommittees to meet as needed, and without significant additional staff resources, in order to develop recommendations that will be presented to the full board or commission. Staff resources to support City boards and commissions will continue to be evaluated on a regular basis by the City Manager and the Health Officer in consultation with Department Heads and the City Council. Provisions of the Commissioners' Manual that are temporarily suspended may be reinstated at any point by action of the full Council.

BACKGROUND

The Commissioners' Manual is a compilation of state and local laws, and local policies and best practices that apply to City boards and commissions. The Commissioners' Manual is a valuable resource for commissioners, commission secretaries, City staff, and the public, and is provided to new commissioners, new commission secretaries, and is accessible to the public via the City website. The Manual was last updated on September 10, 2019 with Resolution No. 69,063-N.S.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

At the November 30, 2020 Agenda & Rules Committee meeting, the Committee requested that staff present an item to the full City Council that would allow for the temporary suspension of the local requirement that ad hoc subcommittees of City boards and commissions adhere to State open meeting procedures.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The City Council could leave the existing provisions in place. Under the existing provisions, if ad hoc subcommittee functions were to resume, staff resources would need to be reallocated in order to fulfill the open meeting requirements in the Commissioners' Manual.

CONTACT PERSON

Mark Numainville, City Clerk, 981-6900

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS' MANUAL AND RESOLUTION NO. 69,063-N.S. THAT APPLY TO MEETINGS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

WHEREAS, the Commissioners' Manual is a compilation of state and local laws, and local policies and best practices that apply City boards and commissions; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Commissioners' Manual, ad hoc subcommittees of City boards and commissions are required to follow State open meeting procedures, a requirement that is specific to Berkeley and adopted by resolution in the Commissioners' Manual; and

WHEREAS, ad hoc subcommittees are not legislative bodies under the Brown Act and are not required to post agendas or allow for public participation; and

WHEREAS, due to the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff resources are not currently available to support the open meeting requirements of the Commissioners' Manual as they pertain to ad hoc subcommittees; and

WHEREAS, the City Council may take formal action to temporarily suspend the provisions of the Commissioners' Manual that pertain to open meeting procedures for ad hoc subcommittee, thereby allowing ad hoc subcommittees to meet without the need for significant additional staff resources.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Council hereby temporarily suspends the provisions of the Commissioners' Manual and Resolution No. 69,063-N.S. that require ad hoc subcommittees of City boards and commissions to follow State open meeting procedures, thereby enabling ad hoc subcommittees to meet and conduct work while allowing City staff to continue emergency response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic.